



# MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
MAY 11, 2010

CONTACT: TISHA CALABRESE-BENTON (TDEC)  
(615) 532-0789  
ANDREA TURNER (HEALTH)  
(615) 741-3446

## **State Agencies Urge People to Stay out of Rivers and Streams in Flood-Impacted Areas**

*Work Continues to Restore Damaged Infrastructure*

NASHVILLE - The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and the Tennessee Department of Health urge people to continue to stay out of rivers and streams in areas impacted by last week's flooding, and to wash thoroughly if contact cannot be avoided. While the flood waters have receded, many areas suffered significant damage to infrastructure, including wastewater treatment plants and collection systems - the network of pipes and pumps that move wastewater from homes and businesses to the plants for treatment.

"The professionals in our local communities' wastewater collection and treatment systems are working round-the-clock to restore full treatment capabilities," said Environment and Conservation Deputy Commissioner for Environment, Paul Sloan. "We are overseeing that process, and they are making significant progress every day. But the floods caused quite a bit of damage, so we are asking that people avoid getting into area rivers and streams until these infrastructure issues are fully resolved."

Environment and Conservation and the Department of Health also caution that people should avoid contact with floodwaters that may be captured in retention ponds or other areas, as well as water coming from manholes, which signals a sewage overflow. If you see retention ponds or overflows that need attention, please call your local utility or emergency management agency.

If water contact cannot be avoided, or if you are unsure of the cleanliness of the water you have contacted, the best thing to do is wash with clean water and soap. Ingestion of contaminated water and contact with open cuts or scrapes would be the greatest cause for concern from a health standpoint.

"I cannot stress enough the importance of following this guidance, which will assist in protecting health and preventing illness associated with contaminated water," said State Health Commissioner Susan R. Cooper, MSN, RN. "Additionally, parents and caregivers need to know the whereabouts of teens and children to ensure they too are avoiding contact with these bodies of water."

(MORE)

**Flood Impacts, Cont.**  
**May 11, 2010**

More than 70 wastewater treatment systems suffered some sort of damage from last week's flooding. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are providing oversight and technical support to impacted systems. In addition, Environment and Conservation has begun sampling rivers and streams in Middle Tennessee in order to monitor water quality after the floods.

Bacteria biodegrade in the environment, so once the sources of bacteriological contamination are stopped there should be no long-term environmental impacts.

###